



*Many Voices Working for the Community*

## **Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board**

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**For Immediate Release**

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### **Advisory Board Chair Offers Views of Important Environmental Issues for Oak Ridge**

The relationship between environmental improvements and economic growth has been the subject of intense debate for the past four decades. Beginning with the passage of the Clean Air and Water Acts in the early 1970s, the economic impact from various cleanup programs has been subject to interpretation. However, here at the Department of Energy's Oak Ridge Reservation, the relevance is becoming increasingly clear. As a citizen's advisory board, we at the Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board (ORSSAB) would like to share our perspective on the key environment management issues facing the Oak Ridge Reservation. The effective resolution of these issues in a timely manner will have a profound effect on the economics of the region and the safety of citizens, now and in the future.

One of the most prominent programs ever undertaken at Oak Ridge has just begun in earnest. This program involves the eventual demolition of over 200 buildings and facilities at Oak Ridge National Laboratory and the Y-12 Nuclear Complex, in addition to the ongoing demolition of 500 structures at the East Tennessee Technology Park. In addition to the obvious, immediate advantages of economic stimulus and job creation, this dismantlement and demolition effort will eliminate many high-risk legacies of the Manhattan Project, thereby facilitating future private-sector industrial development and enabling modernization activities at the lab and Y-12.

Many of the buildings to be demolished are over 60 years old, have not been in use for several years, and are prone to weather-induced deterioration. Prior to demolition, many of these facilities must undergo a careful decommissioning process to mitigate the potential release of any harmful contaminants. A critical challenge for the Department of Energy involves being able to maintain these older, abandoned buildings in a safe and stable condition until the time of demolition. Innovative strategic planning will be needed to prioritize the highest risk facilities, coordinate maintenance and surveillance activities, and identify and save historically significant artifacts. Based on the quantity of structures involved, it will be a substantial task to ensure that the pace of demolition exceeds any serious building decay. This is an issue that warrants close scrutiny by the stakeholders in addition to the professionals tasked with managing a solution.

The dismantlement and demolition work will generate a substantial volume of waste which must be disposed of in the Department's hazardous waste facility in Bear Creek Valley. Typical wastes include contaminated soil, building debris, and scrap equipment. While sorting and segregation of the waste can defer a portion of this waste to a non-hazardous waste landfill, the remaining

quantities are significant. Expansion of the current hazardous waste facility is proceeding; however, serious concerns have been raised that the volume of new wastes will exceed the maximum possible expansion of the current landfill. This waste disposal issue must be addressed promptly to avoid any adverse impact on the demolition work schedule.

With any such undertaking of this magnitude, it is imperative that the top priority must continue to be protection of public health, now and in the future. Vigilant compliance with worker safety standards must be maintained without compromise. And of course, the public must be properly informed and given the opportunity for input into the environmental management program. The concerned citizens who raised issues in public forums were the primary impetus that spawned many of the environmental cleanup activities that are being implemented today. Continued stakeholder participation in the process is essential. As a citizen's advisory board, we ask you, the stakeholders, to join us in our endeavor to stay closely engaged and involved as the Department of Energy pursues its environmental goals at the Oak Ridge Reservation.

Steven M. Dixon, Chair  
Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board

*ORSSAB meets on the second Wednesday of each month at 6:00 p.m. at the DOE Information Center on 475 Turnpike in Oak Ridge. The public is encouraged to attend, and there is a period provided for the public to speak. For more information, see [www.oakridge.doe.gov/em/ssab](http://www.oakridge.doe.gov/em/ssab).*